

CHINESE TURKISTAN

BY OWEN LATTIMORE

SIN-KIANG (Hsin-chiang, the New Frontier) or Chinese Turkistan, like Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tibet, is a part of the encircling land frontier of China. Its history and its modern problems are inseparable from those of China, yet always distinct. It has been the regular historical practice to treat all of these border countries, which are not quite dependencies and not truly nations, as the proper field for the expansion of Chinese influences. This does not give the whole picture. Actually, periods of Chinese expansion have alternated with periods when the power of the frontier barbarians extended into China.

"Chinese" dynasties "ruling" the border barbarians have frequently been established by the barbarians themselves, either as the result of open invasion or through the alliance of tribesmen beyond the Great Wall with political factions in China. The barbarian dynasties became Chinese, and the capitals remained in China; but power often remained in the hands of the still barbarian tribesmen. The frontier tended to rule the country. From this arises the paradox that the periods of maximum expansion of Chinese influence and culture beyond the Great Wall are not necessarily the periods in which the frontier dominated China, taking from China, in the way of cultural influences, not what was imposed on it but what it wanted. This is true even of the great Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). The real Han expansion stopped at the outer Great Wall systems; the activities of its most able statesmen and generals in Central Asia were not the result of genuine conquest, but were made possible by adroit manipulation of the different Central Asian peoples.

Another characteristic of the frontier as a whole is its division into an "inner" and an "outer" region. This division is most obvious in Inner and Outer Mongolia; but the same structure exists in Manchuria, Central Asia, and Tibet. Briefly, it may be said of this "inner" and "outer" structure that the "inner" region is more closely associated with China, alternately as the garrison-territory of barbarians holding power in China, or as the outpost-region of

Chinese power beyond the Great Wall in periods of Chinese ascendancy. The "outer" region is that which less frequently took part in direct assaults on China, and was less affected by Chinese control in the periods of reaction. Chinese Turkistan belongs to the "outer" sphere, and unless this is clearly apprehended its relation to China cannot properly be appreciated. The important Moslem "pale" in western Kansu province stands to Chinese Turkistan as Inner Mongolia to Outer Mongolia, and graduates in the same way the interaction of China and Chinese Turkistan on each other.

It is against this historical background that Chinese Turkistan must be considered. The province, which is really a group of "native protectorates," has been closely linked with China from the time of the Han dynasty, when a great silk traffic through the Central Asian deserts brought the empires of China and Rome into remote relation and when Central Asia was the key to the foreign policies of China. In the succeeding two thousand years, however, Chinese authority over what is now Sin-kiang has only been operative during some 425 years,¹ divided into several periods, of which the present Chinese overlordship is the fifth important period.

The present geographical boundaries of Chinese Turkistan, and its tribal and administrative organization, follow the lines laid down under the Manchu or Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1911). Although nominally determined by Manchu conquest, they were actually the result, in the main, of the advantage taken by the Manchus of internecine wars among the tribes themselves. At the time when the Manchus conquered China, the whole frontier region, from Tibet to the Pacific, was riven by war. The gravest preoccupation of the Manchus was the prevention, within the frontier region, of the rise of any tribal power that might rival their own. They accomplished their aim only in very small measure by direct conquest. They relied chiefly on setting one tribal element against another, coming forward as arbitrators when the different rivals were exhausted by local warfare, and arranging settlements on the basis of tribal "spheres of interest" and the acceptance of the Manchu House as nominal overlord by each pair of combatants. The element of compromise in these nominal conquests is revealed by the fact that the "tribute" to the emperor was regularly offset by handsome subsidies and presents to the princes and chiefs.

¹C. P. Skrine, *Chinese Central Asia*, London, 1928.

At the time of the Chinese revolution in 1911, the position held by the Manchus passed to the Chinese. The fall of the empire prompted a series of outbreaks in Chinese Turkistan, which were cut short by the emergence of a single able individual, a Chinese (not native to the province) named Yang Tseng-hsin. He succeeded in effecting what was virtually a confirmation of the *status quo*, with the government transferred from imperial appointees to a Chinese civil service, which maintained the general services of the province and continued to hold the old balance between the different tribal, racial, and religious elements. The government was composed in the first instance of Chinese who had served under the Manchus, and has since hardened into a group of office-holding families, which recruit new members only with caution. While, therefore, China has been struggling for twenty-one years with the inevitable results of the revolution, Chinese Turkistan has lived almost completely at peace, by virtue of avoiding every implication of the revolution, under what amounts to the fiction that the revolution never occurred.

The Chinese governing minority in Sin-kiang is comparable to the British element in India; but with the difference that there is no valid connection between the government of Chinese Turkistan and the government of China. They are sundered by the "inner frontier" of Moslem Kansu. The power of the Chinese in Turkistan is largely a fiction, and in so far as it is real is maintained not by the real strength of the Chinese themselves, but by playing off against one another the different subject populations—Moslems against Lama-Buddhists, nomads against settled peoples, towns against country districts. The compactness of the Moslems as the most important minority is discounted by the hostility of sects. Islam, as the "protestantism" of the Middle Eastern religions, has the protestant characteristic of splitting into innumerable sects. Under the lulled rhythm of all life in Central Asia, so long as economic conditions and general political relations are reasonably tranquil, the quarrels of religious sects are not primary causes of disturbance; but they are nevertheless constantly in dispute, and when other conditions combine to precipitate war, they flare up vigorously. It is the incompatibility of sects that prevents cohesion both within the Moslem "pale" of Kansu and the Moslem population of Chinese Turkistan, and has enabled the Chinese to keep the

upper hand: it has been the ruin of each of the great Muhammadan rebellions.

The province of Sin-kiang has an area of roughly 400,000 square miles (about twice the size of the pre-war German empire) of which the greater part is desert. The population is probably about two million, which may include between one and two hundred thousand Chinese; but not even roughly accurate figures are available. Externally its frontiers are well defined by mountains and deserts; the commanding internal features are the great southern and central desert of the Taklamakan, the northern desert of Jungaria, and the T'ien-shan range. This range forms a kind of backbone to the country, and is roughly the historical frontier between nomads on the north and settled peoples on the south. The main precipitation of rainfall is on the north, and for this reason there has always been a corridor of migration along the pasture belts on the northern side of the T'ien-shan, linking Mongolia and Russian Central Asia.

South of the T'ien-shan the rainfall is insufficient to support continuous grazing. The water supply depends chiefly on the rivers which come down from the crests of the high ranges—the Kun-lun and Karakorum ranges on the south as well as the T'ien-shan on the north. Nomads live in the upper mountains, but the regular mountain formation is one in which an arid foothill range is interposed between the main range and the plains, acting as a barrier between the nomads and the people of the oases. Where the streams issue from the foothill range it is possible to spread the water out fanwise through irrigation systems, to form an oasis of great fertility. This accounts for agricultural conditions of extraordinary stability, because the water, depending not on rainfall but on the melting of snows and glaciers, becomes most plentiful when it is most needed. Speaking in general, there are two periods of abundant water: one in the spring, when the snow melts in the lower hills, and one in summer when the thaw extends to the highest snows and the glaciers. This greatly favors the growth of cotton (the most important export crop), as well as the grapes, melons, and other fruits, for which the oases are famous.

Thus, the economic geography of the country, with which racial grouping closely corresponds, may be summarized as follows: an inner backbone range of high mountains, with peaks rising to

about 24,000 feet; an outer range of desert mountains, and an irrigated oasis at each point where a stream from the inner mountains issues by a difficult gorge through the barrier-range. Below the oasis the water of the stream runs to waste, vanishing in the desert or ending in reed-beds, meres, or lakes, in the Taklamakan desert in southern Chinese Turkistan or the Jungarian desert in Jungaria or northern Chinese Turkistan. In these terminal basins and reed-beds there are zones of grazing land; but these, in southern Chinese Turkistan, are separated by desert gaps which impede nomadic migration.

In southern Chinese Turkistan, therefore, population is distributed vertically, from the low-lying reed-beds to the oases, and so up through the barrier mountains into the main ranges. Lateral communication is difficult. The oases are connected, like beads on a string, by an arterial road following the foot of the hills. Local trade is between the plain and the mountains, with the oasis-town as center of distribution and of the petty manufactures which meet most local needs. The arterial road, therefore, serves in the main only for the export of such surplus as can be taken entirely out of the country; since to transport it to an exactly similar neighboring oasis would be useless.

Under modern conditions the chief exports are cotton, wool, hides, furs, small amounts of gold and jade, and the raisins that have been a delicacy in China ever since the introduction of the grape in the Han dynasty. The imports are silks, tea, piece-goods, and a certain number of sundry goods. Generally speaking, not useful goods but luxuries are the most profitable to import; the smaller the bulk and weight, and the higher the value, the more chance of profit, because of the great distances over which goods have to be transported. The movement of culture, historically, has been parallel to that of trade. There has been a marked tendency to import the incidental aspects, rather than the basic values, of Chinese culture. In more ancient times, the luxury class of trade was even more important. Practically the only exports of Chinese Turkistan were gold, jade, and horses of specially fine breed, while the imports were silk and tea; and probably, from the West, weapons of superior make.

There have been two great arterial trade routes, each with its minor variations, in southern Chinese Turkistan: the Lop-nor route,

now abandoned in part, and the T'ien-shan Nan Lu, the Road South of the Heavenly Mountains. This, the great route of the present day, enters Sin-kiang from Kansu and passes from Hami (Kumul) to Urumchi, which is actually north of the T'ien-shan. Then it passes back to the south of the mountains and runs through Turfan, Toksun, Karashahr, Korla, Kuchar, Aksu, and Maralbashi to Kashgar. Here it joins the western terminal half of the Lop-nor route, which now survives chiefly as an internal trade route, not communicating with China but running from Lop-nor along the foot of the Kunlun and Karakorum, through Keriya, Khotan, and Yarkand to Kashgar.

These two roads link together the oases of the agricultural eastern Central Asian Turks—the Turki, called by the Chinese Ch'an-t'ou or Turbaned Heads. Among the Turki are also found (chiefly in the cities) a Chinese population; the T'ung-kan or Dungan, a settled Moslem people probably of mixed Chinese and Turkish blood; and a few minor peoples, such as the Dulani and the Lopliks. In the mountains back of the trade routes are found such peoples as the Kazaks (nomadic Central Asian Turks) in the Karlik Tagh, a part of the T'ien-shan, north of Hami; the Mongols, north of Karashar in the Yulduz region of the central T'ien-shan; and the Kirghiz (another division of nomadic Central Asian Turks) in the western T'ien-shan and in the Karakorum and Kunlun. In the mountains south of Kashgar there are also the Sarikolis, a sedentary people, related to the Tajiks of the highlands of Russian Central Asia.

The chief center of Chinese population is Urumchi, capital and nodal point of the province. The Chinese diminish rapidly in numbers along the road to Kashgar, but are fairly numerous in the Ili region. As agricultural settlers they are most important in the latter, but they are also found in some of the oases between Urumchi and Ili, and around Chuguchak. For the most part, however, they are city dwellers; large traders handling the long-distance caravan trade, petty traders retailing imports from China, members of the government services, and military officers. As private soldiers the Chinese are the poorest material in the province; they are very consciously the ruling race, and it is so easy for a man of any industry and intelligence to make a good living that as a class they feel themselves above the bad pay of the soldier. As a rule, therefore, it is only the worthless and incompetent among the Chinese



URUMCHI FROM A TEMPLE ON THE HILL

Photograph by Owen Lattimore

who enlist; the best troops in the province are Mongols, largely under their own officers, and Moslems under Chinese officers.

While southern Chinese Turkistan is the classical land of the great silk trade routes, northern Chinese Turkistan, or Jungaria, is the land of the migration routes. It is known to the Chinese as T'ien-shan Pei Lu, the Road North of the Heavenly Mountains, because of the main route which, diverging from the South Road at Urumchi, runs westward into Russian Central Asia. This route divides at Hsihu, about halfway to the Russian frontier, into two branches; one which enters Russian Turkistan by the Ili Valley, and one which enters southern Siberia by Chuguchak, in the Emil Valley.

Jungaria is named from the Jungar, the Left or East Wing of the great confederation of Western Mongols, who in the seventeenth century came very near to winning the mastery over all Mongolia, and would in that case have seriously challenged the Manchus in the conquest of China. Owing to disagreements among the Western Mongols themselves, a large body broke away, migrating through Russian Central Asia to the Volga. Some seventy

years later most of these migrated Mongols returned to Chinese Turkistan, by arrangement with the Manchus; those who remained on the Volga are the Russian Kalmuks of the present day. This double migration is important in history because it is the last of the great Mongol migrations, involving really large numbers and really great distances. It is also important because it reveals how the Manchu dominion in Chinese Turkistan, which was later claimed as a direct conquest, was founded actually on diplomatic manipulation of the different racial and tribal groups, after the Mongols had already overrun the whole country and then quarreled among themselves.

The geographical structure of the communities along the North Road is comparable to that of the South Road. There is the same string of oases, with its background of mountains. There is, however, one cardinal difference, in that the string of oases is dominated by a line of country suitable for uninterrupted nomadic migration. The power of the nomads is reinforced by a route running along the flanks of the Altai, north of the Jungarian desert and converging on the North Road; it forms a corridor from Mongolia, through the Tarbagatai region and the Emil Valley, into Russian Central Asia and southern Siberia.

Because it lay open to nomad incursions, the social-economic oasis-structure of the North Road was periodically overwhelmed by invasions, and the growth of society and civilization was much less continuous. For this reason the archaeological remains of the North Road are not so rich as those of the southern oases—apart altogether from the greater dryness of the south, which is comparable to that of Egypt in favoring the preservation of ruins and the objects in them. Conquests of the southern oases must normally have been effected by indirect approach from the North Road. Whoever holds the North Road has comparatively free scope of movement, and by striking across the passes of the T'ien-shan can master separately the oases of the South Road; which though to a high degree uniform in race, language, religion, and culture, have no political cohesion and no sense of united nationality. They are islands, which know of each other but do not belong to each other. These phenomena continue to be of importance in our own day, because the North Road lies open to access from Siberia and Russian Central Asia, while the approach from China is exceedingly long and as difficult as it is long.

Freedom of movement and large-scale migration along the North Road have blurred the local historical outlines. In each oasis "pocket" of southern Chinese Turkistan the population tends to be stable. Each oasis has seen many conquests; but the conquerors came in small detachments and imposed only a small ruling class on top of the local population. Even in the most flourishing ages of the Silk Route there do not seem to have been sweeping movements of population. Communities of merchants from all over Asia had their separate quarters in the prosperous towns; they brought their languages and their religions, but they did not, on the whole, displace what they found; they added to it. Even the Chinese, in the long period of their modern influence, which began in the seventeenth century (under the Manchus), displaced but little. They represent one more addition; and both in quantity and quality that addition is remarkably small, west of Hami and Turfan.

Along the North Road, on the other hand, racial and cultural history tends to be disconnected and confused. It is a succession of catastrophes and sweeping replacements. In times of strong government, settled populations grow up in the oases; in times of war, they are obliterated. Sometimes they are replaced immediately by the conquerors, sometimes they are left desolate for years. Sometimes, even, the remnants of the oasis-people turn nomad. This is a type of historical change that is too little appreciated, because of the emphasis given to the changes that take place when nomadic peoples invade civilized regions and are absorbed in them. Yet the region north of the Great Wall of China has frequently seen the conversion of settled people into pastoral nomads.

The Ili Valley, the "promised land" of Chinese Central Asia, is enclosed between two arms of the T'ien-shan, and opens into what is now the Kazakistan Soviet Socialist Republic of Russian Central Asia. It is the richest part of the dominion, but the least developed. Forests, mines, rich mountain pastures, and fertile arable lands lie close to one another, but the land has never enjoyed long-continued development. Cities have been founded only to be destroyed. The great valley forms a bay into which have eddied racial elements from each of the migrations that has swept along the Nomads' Highway between Mongolia and Russian Central Asia. Here are found Mongols, Kazaks, and Kirghiz; Taranchis—immigrant settlers from the Kashgar region; Solons, Sibos, and Chinese. The Solons and Sibos came from northern Manchuria, from the region historically



A KAZAK FAMILY GROUP

Photograph by Owen Lattimore

equivalent to Outer Mongolia, and were "planted" as Manchu military colonists. They still preserve their Manchu dialects better than the Manchu language is preserved in Manchuria. The Sairam Nor approach to the Ili Valley is held by Chahar Mongols in the Bore-tala Valley. They migrated from the Chahar region of Mongolia, some 2,000 miles away, under Manchu orders.

Ili at the present time is the most desired goal of immigrants from China, because its lack of development gives them the maximum of opportunity. By long tradition, however, it is politically violent and unstable. Here occurred almost the only massacres of the town Manchus and severe fighting during the Chinese revolution. Frontier conditions are still more uncertain than in any other part of the province. The political frontier does not accord with the needs of the nomads. Across the frontier are those of the Kazaks who are under Russian rule. The Kazaks, although thus politically divided and further subdivided into many tribes, are culturally one nation. It has long been their practice to migrate across the political boundary at their own discretion; a practice which their overlords have always prevented if they could. When they find

Chinese rule lighter than Russian, there is an inevitable tendency to move into Chinese territory, moving back again when conditions change. During the period of rapid Russian colonization, just before 1914, and again during the Russian revolution, the migration was from Russian into Chinese territory. At the present time there is attempted migration in both directions. Tribesmen who are not reconciled to the Soviet order try to escape into Chinese territory; while others, from the Chinese side, dissatisfied with Chinese rule and attracted by the growing prestige of Russia, attempt to enter Russian territory. Russian Kazaks are allowed to carry arms, while the Chinese do everything in their power to prevent the tribes under their rule from acquiring modern arms. The frontier is continually disturbed by surreptitious, forbidden flittings, and also by bold thieving raids on the horse-herds, in which the well-armed tribesmen from the Russian side usually get the better of it.

Finally, there is the Tarbagatai-Altai region, which forms a sort of outer northwest ward of Chinese territory. A large part of it, administered from Sharasume (called by the Chinese Ch'eng-hua-se) is geographically and ethnically part of the Altai region of Mongolia. It was so administered until the Chinese revolution, when Outer Mongolia declared for and achieved a measure of autonomy. Many of the Mongols of this region, however, are related to those established in the T'ien-shan, and under the influence of one of their princes they adhered to the province of Sin-kiang in preference to remaining with Mongolia.

It is precisely in this region that the Altai migration-corridor converges on the North Road, so that strategically the region is of the greatest importance. The population, although predominantly Mongol, contains also a number of Kazaks, of the Altai division of that group of tribes, and a number of Altai-Urianghai, of a Mongolized Turkish stock. The Sharasume frontier is a matter of much concern to the Chinese authorities, who are always afraid that the influence of Outer Mongolia will cause a rising there, the more so since the Mongols under Chinese rule in Turkistan have gradually but obviously been growing less contented with the treatment they receive.

The province of Sin-kiang and its heterogeneous peoples are governed, as has already been described, by a small alien minority, the Chinese, under the fiction that the Chinese are conquerors who are in a position to vindicate their rule by force and to hold the

province against any insurrection from within or invasion from without. This fiction has worked admirably. The government combines local corruption with admirable general efficiency. Its currency is worthless, yet its economic condition is remarkably steady, compared not only with China proper but with almost any country in the world. It is politically, economically, and socially backward, but probably more stable and contented, at least until very recently, than any region of equal area in the world. It has dealt successfully with the danger of invasion, and handled well a numerous incursion of armed men thrown out of Russia by the revolution. Its record for civil war during the twenty-one years of the Chinese republic has been astonishing; one or two factional crises among the ruling Chinese and a very few risings among subject peoples brought about by excessive assertion of authority.

The final paradox is that the government, although nominally it represents the power of China over a colonial dominion, exhibits the utmost caution in dealing with the Central Government, and avoids altogether any implication in the politics of China. It conducts its own foreign relations with Russia and India, and fears intervention from China at least as much as it fears either foreign aggression or native rebellion.

Chinese Turkistan is divided from China by great distances and formidable deserts. There is one great cart-road approach, through Kansu. The first Republican governor of the province used to refer to the eighteen stages of desert travel just beyond his border as his eighteen ten-thousands of loyal troops, protecting him from Chinese civil wars. Apart from its natural difficulties the cart-road is frequently closed by civil war, banditry, or conflict between the Moslem and Chinese elements in Kansu. There is one other main line of approach; that by the Mongolian caravan routes. The two or three original caravan routes have been reduced to one since the secession of Outer Mongolia from China, and the one remaining route, being accessible at one point from Kansu, has been almost put out of commission by the extortions of the Kansu tax-gatherers.

With the trade between the province and China thus reduced, Soviet Russia has for some years enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the foreign trade of Chinese Turkistan. The prosperity of foreign trade is essential to Chinese rule, for so long as their subjects are prosperous, they are much less likely to rebel. The importance of

Russian trade means that the Soviet Government can exercise great pressure on the local authorities. For this reason, the province independently opened relations with Russia in 1925, and since then the Russian consulates have remained open in Turkistan, although they have been withdrawn from China proper.

Russian interests also succeeded in opening an experimental motor traffic between the frontier at Chuguchak and the capital at Urumchi, in spite of Chinese reluctance. The conservative Chinese opinion has always been that traffic ought to pass freely within the province, for the sake of trade; but not rapidly, because rapid transport would increase the danger of spread of any local insurrection, and also would benefit Russia more than Turkistan in the event of conflict. The peculiar attitude of the Chinese toward motor transport is illustrated by the fact that when it was first discussed, no Chinese were trained as drivers and mechanics. Only "natives" were to be employed. It was feared that if Chinese were employed, they might be tempted to meddle in politics, since control of the motor transport would be of grave importance in the event of a political crisis. Since then the attitude toward motor services has been modified by the desire to revive trade with China at least enough to break down the Russian economic domination. Attempts are now being made to develop a motor route through Inner Mongolia, but they are much hampered by political difficulties and sandy deserts.

The difficulties of Chinese traders at present are acute. Being almost cut off from markets in China, they become little more than middlemen between the natives and the Russians. In Turkistan, as elsewhere, the Russians prefer to work through monopoly firms. As each firm has no competitor in its area, the Chinese and native merchants dealing with Russia have to take what is offered for their exports and pay what is demanded for their imports. It is for this reason that Russian political influence, which is strong in Outer Mongolia and intermittently evident in Manchuria, is normally suspended in Turkistan. The Russians can buy and sell in what is practically a closed market, which is of the highest importance to them, since Russia is in need of foreign trade, but can only trade in an open market at the cost of great sacrifice.

In Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan there is a limited trade with India. It is, however, hardly likely to expand to any important extent, because of the enormous physical difficulties of crossing the mountain barriers. There is, however, a certain amount of cultural

influence from India and an important pilgrim traffic. Pilgrims to Mecca, who used to go chiefly through Russian Turkistan, now go through India. In actual trade, however, conditions are so awkward that Indian traders invest a great part of their profits in money-lending; with the result that probably the most important function of the British consular officials in Turkistan—with the exception of the diplomatic benefits of proximity to their Russian colleagues—is to attend to friction arising out of lawsuits between Indian money-lenders and Chinese subjects.

The financial arrangements of Chinese Turkistan are extraordinary. It has long been the practice in China for the provincial authorities, usually under the control of the military, to debase the currency by demanding good money in payment of taxes and issuing fiduciary currency, which rapidly depreciates, in paying troops and settling other obligations. This is possible largely because of banking arrangements which allow the officials to remit their profits to safe places in Shanghai and the foreign concessions. This is not possible in Sin-kiang, because the province has no banks, no banking connection with China proper, and no money in use that passes current in China. The only way in which either officials or private individuals can transfer any important sum to China is to export goods and bank the proceeds of the sale. For this reason, most officials are interested in trading firms and therefore in the prosperity of trade generally. Even within the province several different regional currencies are in use, and this tends to stabilize political conditions; for it is almost impossible to accumulate sufficient cash funds in any one place to finance a political venture, without detection.

The progress of "sinization" has been and still is extremely slow. Higher culture, it is true, and such higher technical development as exists are predominantly Chinese.

"Do you smelt copper here?" "No, we don't know how, but the Chinese do." This conversation, recorded as typical by Huntington² a quarter of a century ago, is still typical. "The people do not seem to care to learn to do anything new," says Huntington. "They might learn much from their Chinese masters, but no one has sufficient ambition." Huntington deals with the characters of the Central Asian peoples in relation to their environments. There is, however, I think, another important factor to be considered. The same

²Ellsworth Huntington, *The Pulse of Asia*, Boston, 1907.

indifference to "progress and civilization" as taught by the Chinese is noticeable throughout the frontier regions. It has, I think, partly an historical basis, in the privileged position so often held by the border peoples. They tend to accept the benefits made available to them as privileges to which they are entitled. Not only have people no ambition to learn; they consider it a loss of status when they have to learn. People who wish to keep their status hire Chinese to do things for them. It needs familiar contact with the "barbarians" to bring out the fact that the serene Chinese contempt for the barbarian

is quite equaled by the contempt of the barbarian for the Chinese.

In this connection it is illuminating to consider the attitude of these peoples to the West, to which they have never stood in a position of privilege. It is congruent with the fact that historically the importance of Chinese culture in the transfrontier region has been balanced by the strategic advantage of the frontiers over China. Historically, the spread of Chinese culture has always been as much a matter of what the barbarians felt like taking as of what the Chinese felt it necessary to impose. These same "ignorant and unambitious" Central Asians take to Western "progress," of which Russia is the disseminator, quite readily. Railways, motor cars, and all things mechanical they regard with enthusiasm: and this attitude I believe is to be closely related to the fact that historically power and conquest have tended to come from the north and west.

Education, in a country living in the past, is not a matter of obvious importance until the present breaks in on the past. For both Moslems and Mongols, generally speaking, education means



KIRGHIZ WEAVING. NEAR SANJU

Photograph by Owen Lattimore

only religious education. The Chinese have their own schools, but "higher education" has gained ground very slowly, though the number of men in the government services who have been educated in modern schools and universities in China, or even abroad, is gradually increasing.

The Chinese also maintain schools, of no very high quality, for educating "natives" on Chinese lines. It is a regular characteristic of the Chinese that petty merchants learn the languages of the subject peoples, while officials do not. Thus, on the whole, the Chinese practice is the reverse of that of Western nations which rule in the Orient. The Chinese administrator knows and cares little about the language, life, customs, and point of view of the people he governs. He works through a "native" interpreter who can speak Chinese. This leads to a great deal of corruption, but is not altogether to the disadvantage of the Chinese. Local resentment is likely to be directed first against the interpreters and headmen who are in immediate contact, and can often be mollified by punishment of an underling. On the other hand it damages Chinese prestige in one important respect. It is the common opinion of the "natives" that "the Chinese books are full of all wisdom, and the way to get rich and powerful is to model yourself on the Chinese; but also the Chinese must be the most corrupt people in the world, for all who have anything to do with them become oppressors, thieves, and liars." This does not matter so much as long as Chinese prestige remains high. The Central Asian peoples tend to think that oppression is the chief function of any ruler, native or alien; but when another power begins to rise in prestige, resentment against the Chinese can easily be exploited.

Chinese Turkistan, then, is a country in which the geographical distribution of peoples and types of economy, the relation of settled oasis populations to nomads, and of the Chinese culture to the patchwork of the native cultures, as inherited from a long history of slow development but strongly established pattern, are plainly reflected in the aspect of the present. The influence of inherited relationships and antagonisms remains important largely because isolation, distance, and imperfect communications deaden the impact of new forces and ideas. The bitterest hostilities and local wars, when they break out, are not yet related to the clash between new civilization and old, as they are so generally in the rest of the East, but are still generated primarily by ancient incompatibilities

between nomad and peasant, between Moslem and non-Moslem, and between one Moslem sect and another.

Chinese rule, though successful as an expedient, has not been able to free itself from the cycle of Central Asian history. Its own stability and success are now gradually producing a tension that must break down in war and rebellion. Its most important phenomenon is one that must often have been seen in the past—expansion from the South Road oases into the regions of the North Road. Such an expansion is inevitably produced by a long period of tranquil government, especially when it represents the power of the “civilized” over the “uncivilized.” Agriculture creates a denser population and a larger and more easily collected tax-revenue; and the government always knows where the people are. A nomadic population always tends toward tribal loyalties, and the tribal leaders are less easily supervised than village headmen.

The lack of a free supply of colonists from the outside (from China) reduces colonization to a shifting of population within the province. A few Chinese come in from Kansu, but most of the colonists are T'ung-kan from the Urumchi-Manas region moving farther west, or Turki cultivators crossing over from the oases of the South Road. Some of the colonization is directed toward oases that have been depopulated since the Moslem insurrections of the late nineteenth century; but the nomads are also affected, and are decidedly resentful.

It is commonly said of colonization at the expense of nomads that they have plenty of spare land. In Central Asia and in many parts of Mongolia, this is not true. The severity of the climate makes prosperous nomadic life possible only if good, sheltered wintering-grounds are available. This is responsible for a remarkable difference in the summer and winter relations between nomadic tribes; notably between the Kazaks as one main group and the Mongols as another. In summer they scatter out over wide grazing grounds, and raid each others' herds. In winter, the lack of good quarters drives them in close to each other; a tacit truce is declared, and they spend the winter in comparative amity.

Not only Chinese officials going out to survey land for colonization grants, but foreign travelers also, usually visit the nomads in summer. Thus, the universal report is of vast ranges of pasture with a very thin population. The scarcity of good winter quarters is not given proper attention. Now it is these very winter-quarter



CARAVAN MASTER AND CAMELS IN SNOW

Photograph by Owen Lattimore

valleys, because they are sheltered, that first attract the colonist. The nomads, therefore, feel pinched in and oppressed much earlier than is generally supposed.

Then again, many enthusiasts of colonization would like to see settlement from the outside reinforced by conversion of the nomads themselves to agricultural life. Popular theory argues that agricultural economy is a "higher form of civilization" than nomadic life, and innocently assumes that the nomads will be "attracted by the opportunities of progress." This, so far as Chinese colonization is concerned, is a complete fallacy. The central characteristic of all the nomad peoples in contact with China is that, far from looking up to China, they look down on the Chinese. This historic truth has been unduly obscured by the standard histories, which dwell on the sinization of the barbarian invaders of China and neglect the fact that throughout history real power tended to reside in the hands of those barbarians who remained outside the Great Wall, to breed fresh contingents of conquerors.

The traditional attitude remains strong even in periods like the present when, owing solely to the accident that the Chinese have

more modern arms than the nomads, the nomads are weak in relation to China. They still prefer to avoid the Chinese, not to "raise themselves to the Chinese level." This is proved conclusively by the fact that wherever nomads, in contact with the Chinese, settle down to agriculture and the Chinese way of life, it is always and only the feckless and unenterprising, or the helpless, who settle down; and in so doing they earn the contempt, not the respect or admiration, of their fellows. It is not the rich, the socially superior, those best able to "appreciate the advantages of the higher civilization," who embrace the chance of "progress." These, on the contrary, are the people who keep up most doggedly their pride in the ancient way of life, who refuse to the last possible moment to compromise, and who form the backbone of those last bitter rebellions that either turn back the process of colonization or end in the extinction of the nomads. Another little-known proof of the high standing of the nomadic life is the fact that a certain number of the immigrants, notably among the Turki, abandon the settled life in favor of the nomad life.

It is the eternal tragedy of China that all the peoples of the barrier-regions of the northern and northwestern frontiers face inward on China. The rhythm of their history has been determined from of old as an alternation of advance and retreat, with their faces toward China. It is virtually impossible to convert them to face about and take part in Chinese expansion. The complementary aspect of this historical bias is that Mongols and Central Asian peoples have always tended to accord prestige and admiration more readily to Russia than to China. It is demonstrably true that the Russians are more successful even in converting nomads to agriculture than are the Chinese. This has been true even in the past, although the Russian expansion in Siberia was marked by bitter conflicts with different tribes; it is more true in the present, because even the small degree of mechanization in Russian farming gives an appeal that China cannot offer.

Above all, the radical difference in character between Russian and Chinese agriculture is important. The wooden plow and intensive cultivation of the Chinese have never been regarded as anything but the marks of slaves and subject peoples; but it is possible to accept the superior plows and extensive cultivation of the Russians as worthy of free men. The intensive Chinese agriculture is bound up with a social order which is never successful with-

out close settlement, crowded villages, and frequent towns. The extensive Russian agriculture is possible in isolated wilderness settlements with mixed pastoral and agricultural economy, which makes much easier the transition from nomadic life. In Chinese Turkistan, the very regions where a long period of peaceful Chinese rule has brought out the old opposition between oasis and free pasture are the regions which lie more open to Russia than to China, and the peoples affected are related in blood, language, and religion to peoples who, under Russian rule, have been granted republics of their own and encouraged (perhaps as a distraction from the drawbacks of rigid economic control) to take pride in strong local nationalism.

The immemorial Chinese practice in dealing with "natives" is to work through their chiefs. In times of barbarian ascendancy the best way of minimizing the impact is to bargain with separate chiefs. In times of Chinese ascendancy the best method of preventing barbarian unity is to favor the chiefs against one another in rotation. In recent years, however, the lack of obvious resistance and the success in maintaining the continuity of Chinese rule at the time of the revolution and again after the murder of Governor Yang a few years ago—both obvious occasions for native insurrection—have encouraged the feeling that the natives are no longer dangerous.

Success in Chinese colonization, notably in Mongolia and Manchuria, gave rise to a conviction that the day of the barbarian was finally over. The Kuomintang urged that the time had come to set about the business of making all natives either turn Chinese or get out. The Kuomintang has but little political power in Chinese Turkistan, because the ruling Chinese faction, as has been pointed out, can only maintain itself by keeping free of commitments to political factions in China. Nevertheless, the general cast of thought which the Kuomintang represents has been spreading.

During the long period of strong rule, the privileges and subsidies of the native Turki "princes," who had once been at the head of "native states" in a number of the southern oases, had been either cut down or abolished. Even on the North Road the powers of the Kazak chiefs and Mongol princes were being progressively curtailed. The only important surviving "native state" in the south was that of Hami (Kumul). In 1929 it was decided to discontinue the "native state" administration and substitute the ordinary form of Chinese administration. It is probable that the year 1929 marks

the peak of Chinese expansion in Manchuria, Mongolia, Central Asia, and Tibet.

When an attempt was made to remeasure lands for taxation purposes, a rebellion broke out among the mountaineers who are the outlying subjects of the Hami principality. It rapidly became so serious that Chinese authority throughout the province was imperiled. There was a danger of risings all over the province. The very inferior troops of the standing army were incapable of putting down the insurrection, and for the first time the practice of using Mongols against Moslems was inadequate. The Chinese met the situation by an application extraordinary of the old principle of using one subject race to hold down another. They enlisted "White" Russians—non-Soviet exiles and refugees—in the Ili region, turned over to them the arms of the regular troops, transported them to Hami, and with them put down the uprising; though it still smolders in the mountains.

With the outbreak of the Hami trouble, the present régime in Chinese Turkistan passed its peak. There is now more banditry—in a province notably free of banditry—than ever before, and it is closely associated with racial trouble. Increased efforts are now being made to renew contact with China, in spite of the known danger of implication in civil wars, and this weakening of the old confident isolation probably means a loss of conviction in their own sufficiency among the ruling minority.

What, then, is the present state of Chinese Turkistan? The Chinese, after prolonged contact, have not amalgamated with the native population. Nor has Chinese culture penetrated deeply. It remains an alien veneer, affecting only a limited number of activities and a small proportion of the people. Chinese political and military supremacy, long a fiction, but a fiction handled with eminent skill and functioning well as a working theory, is in danger of collapse. The province is an insecure salient in the line of the frontier; and China itself, in the eyes of many of the subject peoples, appears to be crumbling inward on its own center.

The position of Chinese Central Asia can hardly be clarified without catastrophe. For more than a generation it has been completely occupied in a cycle of its own history of the immemorial cast; controled by an outside power, under title of conquest, but actually ruled by manipulation of one native element against another. In the days of the Silk Route, the Han dynasty asserted

its power chiefly by negotiation among the petty Central Asian states, while the silk trade, passing through, was more an affair of resident alien trading communities than of the desert-isolated oasis-dwellers themselves. Religions from India and the Near East were later imported; the costumes and languages of many lands and nations became familiar, but the basic forms of life altered little. The rhythm of history grew out of the relation of oasis to desert and mountain, of caravan route to migration route, and through it ran also the ebb and flow of the power of the Border over China, and of China over the Border.

So, in our own time, the affairs of nations have passed over the heads of nomads and oasis-dwellers. For them the great affairs of the world have been the creeping extension of Chinese control, reflected in the decline of native princes and rulers, the spread of oasis-life into the traditional domain of the nomads, the balance between Moslem and Mongol, and the rivalries of the sects which forever rend the Moslem world internally. They have said, in effect, of the alien civilization of China, "It is true, there are such things"; of India, "Men have been there, and returned"; of Russia, "Men speak of wonders."

Yet all the while the relative position of this Inner Asian world has been altering. Alien forces have been crowding closer to it. They have artificially been held back, and therefore, when they do break in, the effect of the shock will be all the more like the foundering of one world and the creation, in agony, of another. The apprehensive efforts of the Chinese in Sin-kiang to renew contact with China, and the important modern movement in China itself to stimulate expansion into the northwest, appear to be only echoes of the probably more important fact that real Chinese power on the frontier is more unstable than at any time since the revolution. Political, financial, and physical difficulties impede the extension of railway approach toward Chinese Central Asia. A turbulent Moslem population in Kansu stands like an "Inner Mongolia" between China and the "Outer Mongolia" of Chinese Turkistan. Nor can the Chinese in Sin-kiang obtain a free supply of the modern arms which might refresh their title to rule. To attempt to import them from China would be to present them to some militarist on the way; nor could they be imported through Russia or India without some compensation of the kind that one government considers appropriate from another.

In Russian Central Asia, on the other hand, the drift toward Chinese Turkistan is inexorable. The political-economic and social-economic movements there demand extension into Chinese Turkistan if they are to fulfil themselves. Certain important irrigation projects in Kazakhstan cannot be undertaken unless they are based on works constructed on the Ili River in Chinese territory. The Turk-Sib railway, flanking the whole western frontier of Chinese Turkistan, has confirmed its economic orientation toward the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

Thus, when the forces of the new world do at last break in on Chinese Central Asia, it is almost inevitable that they will enter raw, strong and overwhelming from the Russian side instead of in a graduated, attenuated, and semi-Chinese form from the Chinese side. The internal history of Chinese Turkistan shows an alternating interaction between the oases of the south and the "land of free movement" of the north. It is likely that a period of oasis ascendancy is ending and that the alternate period historically representing nomad ascendancy will be transformed into an inrush from the North Road, comparable to the old nomad descents in form, but infused with a new and strange vigor and many unknown qualities derived from Russian Central Asia.